



South Central District Health

Keeping your family & community healthy
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WILDFIRES SPARK HEALTH ADVISORY FOR MAGIC VALLEY RESIDENTS

South Central District Health and the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) are warning people of unhealthy and potentially hazardous air quality conditions due to smoke from wildfires. Although there are fires burning in many southern Idaho locations, the blazes in Blaine County are causing the greatest amount of unhealthy air in the Magic Valley area. According to Steve VanZandt, Air Quality Science Officer with the Twin Falls IDEQ, the Air Quality Index in Blaine County remains in the Unhealthy range with better conditions reported in other Magic Valley areas.

At the present time there is no air quality monitoring device currently available in the Hailey-Ketchum area. Therefore, air quality in the Wood River Valley is estimated according to visibility in miles, instead of air-borne particulates. The quality of air varies based on proximity to the fires, with a higher concentration of Unhealthy air nearer fires. Also air pollution conditions depend on wind direction and speed, as well as fire activity. Daytime winds may clear some areas, but night time valley breezes usually return smoke to the valleys.

Based on the current air quality in the Blaine County area, officials advise everyone to limit outdoor activities. Older adults, individuals with respiratory or heart disease, parents with infants, pregnant women, and others at risk should be very careful with any outdoor activities.

By following a few simple precautions, people can reduce their exposure to smoke in order to protect their health.

- Limit outdoor activities, especially for those with health problems
- Run your air conditioner or furnace fan (without heat) to re-circulate the air in your home
- Wash or change furnace filters frequently and use high efficiency filters to increase air filtration
- For homes without air conditioning or central heat, use portable air purifiers to remove particles and circulate air
- Do not jog, exercise or perform strenuous tasks outdoors
- Stay well-hydrated by drinking plenty of water, since this helps dilute phlegm in the respiratory tract and makes it easier to cough out smoke particles

For those with severe health problems who are living in fire and smoke zones considered Unhealthy or Hazardous, it is recommended relocating to areas with cleaner air until conditions improve. If you have concerns about air quality and your health, check the Environmental Protection Agency website, <http://airnow.gov> and look for the Wildfire Guide for Health Officials publication.

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